

2016

WISCONSIN Winnebago System Sturgeon Spearing Regulations & Information



Chad Cherney with the 137.5 pound, 81.3” lake sturgeon that he registered at Payne’s Point on February 17, 2015. Chad registered the heaviest fish of the 2015 season (DNR Photo).

Sturgeon Hotline
920-303-5444

E-mail Ryan.koenigs@wisconsin.gov if you would like to be added to the Winnebago System fisheries email distribution list and receive updates during sturgeon spearing seasons.

Dear Winnebago Sturgeon Spearer,

As I write this welcome address in mid-December there is one question racing through my mind, as well as likely thousands of sturgeon spearing license holders, and that question is what will Mother Nature provide us with for ice conditions come February 13? The last week of weather has consisted of day time highs in the 40-50s and night time lows above freezing, weather not at all conducive to making ice or any other conventional outdoor winter activities. Hopefully the weather pattern will turn around in the next 2 months, but regardless spearkers should be vigilant about ice conditions in the areas they will plan to travel. No fish is worth more than the safety of an individual.

Spearers are well aware that environmental conditions such as water clarity and ice conditions strongly affect sturgeon spearing success and season length. Luckily for spearkers, 2015 was a good year for safe ice conditions and the water was clear for the most part throughout the Winnebago Pool Lakes. Thus the season lasted just 5 days on the Upriver Lakes and 8 days on Lake Winnebago with a total harvest of 2,158 fish (1,870 from Lake Winnebago and 288 from URL). The harvest from Lake Winnebago ranked 6th all time, and was the largest harvest since the current harvest cap system was implemented in 1999.

The biggest story coming out of the 2015 season was the fish being leaner than years past. After closer analysis of data collected during the 2015 harvest, it became abundantly clear that the forage base for sturgeon was very weak. We knew going into the season that the gizzard shad hatch was quite low, but I was surprised to see few chironomid (lake fly or red worms) larvae in the stomachs of the sturgeon that we sampled. We are aware of a stronger gizzard shad hatch coming into this winter, but it doesn't appear to be a boom year class like those observed in 2010 and 2012. It will remain to be seen how long it will take for the sturgeon to regain condition factors similar to those observed over most of the last decade.

Looking forward to the upcoming season, there are a couple noteworthy items. First, the adult female harvest cap has once again been raised. System wide harvest caps for the 2016 season will be 430 juvenile females, 950 adult females, and 1220 males. Also, a record 13,674 licenses (13,190 for Winnebago and 484 for Upriver Lakes) were sold for the 2016 season which is a 4.1% increase over last season. The increased popularity is likely due to the overall success and publicity of the 2014 and 2015 seasons.

Hopefully the weather pattern will change soon and we can start building ice for the 2016 spearing season. I wish everyone a safe and enjoyable spearing season and hopefully our paths will cross in the coming months. I always enjoy hearing stories about more memories being created during spearing seasons, let's make the 2016 sturgeon spearing season another season to remember!

Looking forward to the 2016 season,

Ryan Koenigs

Winnebago Sturgeon Biologist



Julie Schmitz and her sister proudly display Julie's 66.0", 80.6 pound sturgeon registered at Jim and Linda's (Pipe) on February 14, 2015. If you know either of these two, I hear there is quite a story associated with this fish! (DNR Photo)

Winnebago System Sturgeon Spearing Regulations and Information

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Melissa Zamzow displays her 59.0” 52.7 pound female lake sturgeon that she registered at Indian Point on February 15, 2015.

WINNEBAGO SYSTEM STURGEON SPEARING REGULATIONS

Please take a few minutes to carefully read through this regulation pamphlet.

To report violations call: 1-800-TIP-WDNR (1-800-847-9367) or cell #367

2016 OPEN SEASON – Winnebago System Sturgeon Spearing

Lake Winnebago

February 13, 2016 through February 28, 2016 on Lake Winnebago **or until any of the pre-set harvest caps for Lake Winnebago are reached, OR any of the pre-set Winnebago System-wide harvest caps are reached, whichever comes first** (as per trigger closure rules).

Upriver Lakes (Lakes Butte des Morts, Winneconne, and Poygan)

February 13, 2016 through February 28, 2016 on the Upriver Lakes **or until any of the pre-set harvest caps for the Upriver Lakes are reached, OR any of the pre-set Winnebago System-wide harvest caps are reached, whichever comes first** (as per trigger closure rules).

An annual lottery sturgeon spear fishery began on the Upriver Lakes in 2007. Spearers need to apply for an Upriver Lakes sturgeon lottery tag by August 1 and are notified if they were successful in receiving authorization to purchase an Upriver Lakes sturgeon spearing license by October 1. Group lottery applications of up to four persons are accepted and the group will carry the preference points of the group member with the fewest points. Spearers that applied for an Upriver Lakes license but were not authorized to purchase an Upriver Lakes license receive a preference point, and can still purchase a license for Lake Winnebago before the October 31 license sales deadline (spearers can only buy a license for either Lake Winnebago or the Upriver Lakes, not both). Sales for both Lake Winnebago and Upriver Lakes sturgeon spearing licenses end October 31. The Upriver Lakes sturgeon lottery fishery limits participation to 500 tags in 2016 (numbers of tags in future seasons may vary) and will have a small allotment of the overall sturgeon harvest caps (see below).

Total harvest of sturgeon will be limited through pre-set harvest caps. Harvest caps for the 2016 Winnebago System spearing season are 430 for juvenile females, 950 for adult females and 1220 for males. Portions of the system-wide harvest caps have been allocated to the fisheries on Lake Winnebago and the Upriver Lakes as shown below:

	<i>Juvenile Females</i>	<i>Adult Females</i>	<i>Males</i>
<i>Lake Winnebago</i>	<i>344</i>	<i>855</i>	<i>976</i>
<u><i>Upriver Lakes</i></u>	<u><i>86</i></u>	<u><i>95</i></u>	<u><i>244</i></u>
<i>Winnebago System</i>	<i>430</i>	<i>950</i>	<i>1220</i>

The Department will close the sturgeon spearing season on Lake Winnebago before the maximum 16 days when the following conditions occur:

- At the end of the fishing day in which 100% of any one of the three Lake Winnebago harvest caps is reached or exceeded, or*
- 24 hours from the end of the fishing day within which a harvest of 90% to 99% of any one of the three Lake Winnebago harvest caps is reached.*

The Department will close the sturgeon spearing season on the Upriver Lakes before the maximum 16 days when the following conditions occur:

- At the end of the fishing day in which 100% of any one of the three Upriver Lakes harvest caps is reached or exceeded, or*
- 24 hours from the end of the fishing day within which a harvest of 90% to 99% of any one of the three Upriver Lakes harvest caps is reached.*

The Department will close the sturgeon spearing season on all waters of the Winnebago System before the maximum 16 days when the following conditions occur:

- At the end of the fishing day in which 100% of any one of the three Winnebago System-wide harvest caps is reached or exceeded, or*
- 24 hours from the end of the fishing day within which a harvest of 90% to 99% of any one of the three Winnebago System-wide harvest caps is reached.*

BAG LIMIT: One lake sturgeon per licensee

MINIMUM LENGTH LIMIT: 36 inches

LICENSE REQUIREMENT: To spear sturgeon, residents must purchase a sturgeon spearing license and tag for \$20.00 and nonresidents must purchase a sturgeon spearing license and tag for \$65.00

Only persons 12 years of age and older are eligible to spear sturgeon. No sturgeon spearing license may be issued or purchased after October 31, 2015 except for Wisconsin residents that turn 12 between November 1, 2015 and the last day of the 2016 spearing season, or for Wisconsin residents serving in the Armed Forces that are home on leave during the 2016 spearing season.

The sturgeon spearing license and tag must be carried by the licensee at all times while fishing for sturgeon with a spear. A sturgeon spearing license and tag is nontransferable and no person may use or carry the tag or license of another.

No person may possess a validated sturgeon carcass tag unless attached to a legal sturgeon.

SPEARING HOURS: 7:00 AM to 1:00 PM.

LIGHTS, UNDERWATER CAMERAS, DEPTH LOCATORS

Use of artificial lights of any kind is prohibited while spearing. Underwater cameras may be used, but any lights on the camera must be disabled (turned off, taped over, or non-illuminating). Use of depth Locators is permitted.

POSSESSION AND USE OF A SPEAR

No person may have under his or her control any spear or similar device in any enclosure on the ice or waters of the Winnebago System except when authorized during established sturgeon spearing seasons.

No person may take, capture, kill or attempt to kill sturgeon on the Winnebago System by any means other than spearing with a spear thrown by hand from inside a fishing shelter placed on the ice during the open spearing season.

ICE HOLE RESTRICTIONS

No person may cut, use, or maintain an ice hole larger than 12 inches in diameter or square for the taking of fish in any manner through the ice except spearing sturgeon on the Winnebago System during the open season. The total area of a sturgeon spearing hole, or combination of holes, may not exceed a total of 48 square feet, measured at the surface of the ice. Ice holes larger than 12 inches cut, used, or maintained may not be covered by a shelter, shanty, or similar device, except during the period from 48 hours before and continuing through the open sturgeon spearing season.

ICE HOLE MARKING

Sturgeon spearing ice holes must be marked with at least 2 strips of wood that extend at least 3 feet above the ice. The wood strips must not exceed 1.5 inches in width and .25 inches in thickness (wood lathe meets the requirement). When you first set your shanty, cut a hole and freeze the lathe into the ice for better marking of sturgeon holes. Lathe markers stuck in snow banks are **NOT** adequate because the lathe no longer marks holes when warm weather conditions melt snow.



Lath properly cut into ice on two sides of spearing shanty. © Bob Rashid

SPEARING OF ROUGH FISH

Spearing of any species of fish other than sturgeon from the Winnebago System is prohibited during the sturgeon spearing season.

TAGGING REQUIREMENT

A spearer with a valid, unused sturgeon license and tag who spears a lake sturgeon must **immediately** validate and attach their carcass tag to the sturgeon (just forward of the tail). Any harvested sturgeon must be present at a registration station by 2:00 PM of the same day it was speared.

It is illegal for any person to possess any sturgeon, or part thereof, without the carcass tag validated and attached.

GROUP BAGGING is not legal and occurs whenever the person who tags the sturgeon is different from the person who speared the sturgeon.

TRANSPORTATION

It is unlawful for any person to transport any unregistered sturgeon in or on any motor driven vehicle unless the sturgeon is carried openly exposed and placed so the carcass tag cannot be handled by anyone. **"Openly exposed" means open to view by a person in a passing vehicle.**

The successful spearer must accompany a harvested sturgeon until the fish is registered.

It is illegal to possess an unregistered sturgeon speared from Lake Winnebago outside the highway boundary area delineated as follows: from the intersection of highways 10 and 114 in Menasha, east on highway 114 to highway 55; south on highway 55 to U.S. highway 151; south on U.S. highway 151 to Winnebago drive in Fond du Lac; west on Winnebago drive to Scott street; west on Scott street to highway 45; north on highway 45 to Main street in Oshkosh; north on Main street to Waugoo avenue; east on Waugoo avenue to Bowen street; north on Bowen street to county highway A; north on county highway A to highway 114 in Neenah; east on highway 114 to the intersection of highways 10 and 114 in Menasha.

It is illegal to possess an unregistered sturgeon speared from Lakes Butte des Morts, Winneconne or Poygan outside the highway boundary area delineated as follows: from the intersection of highways 45 and 21 in Oshkosh west on highway 21 to highway 116; north on highway 116 to county highway B; west on county highway B to county highway D; west on county highway D to highway 49; north on highway 49 to county highway H; east on county highway H to highway 110; east on highway 110 to county highway II; south on county highway II to county highway M; south on county highway M to highway 116; east on highway 116 to highway 45; south on highway 45 to highway 21.

REGISTRATION

A person who spears a sturgeon must accompany and exhibit the tagged sturgeon at an official sturgeon registration station (see map page 6) no later than 2:00 PM of the day speared. **To avoid the "end of the day" rush please bring your fish in as soon as possible after spearing it. You must be at the registration station and in-line to register your fish by 2:00 PM.**

Any fish harvested from Lake Winnebago must be registered at one of the sturgeon registration stations on Lake Winnebago. Any fish harvested from Lakes Butte des Morts, Winneconne or Poygan (the Upriver Lakes) must be registered at one of the sturgeon registration stations on the Upriver Lakes.

Department Fisheries staff at the registration stations will collect biological information on the size, sex and age of your fish, and will attach a metal sturgeon registration tag.

Both the sturgeon carcass tag and registration tag must be retained until the carcass is consumed.

STURGEON REGISTRATION STATIONS

Stations are operated daily throughout the season by DNR Fisheries staff. Depending on spearing activity and volume of sturgeon registrations, some stations may be closed before the end of the season. Any necessary early closures will be posted at registration stations.

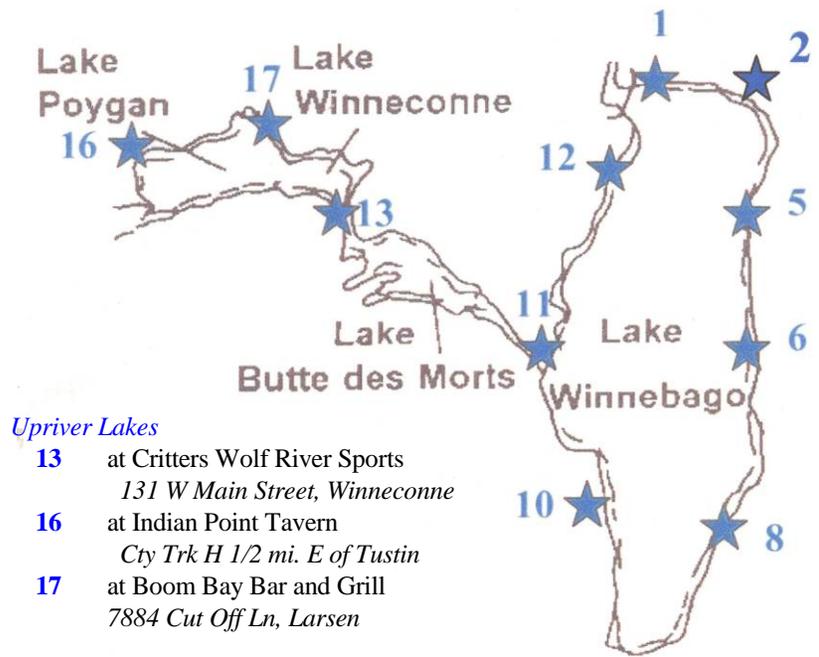
Winnebago System Sturgeon Registration Stations:

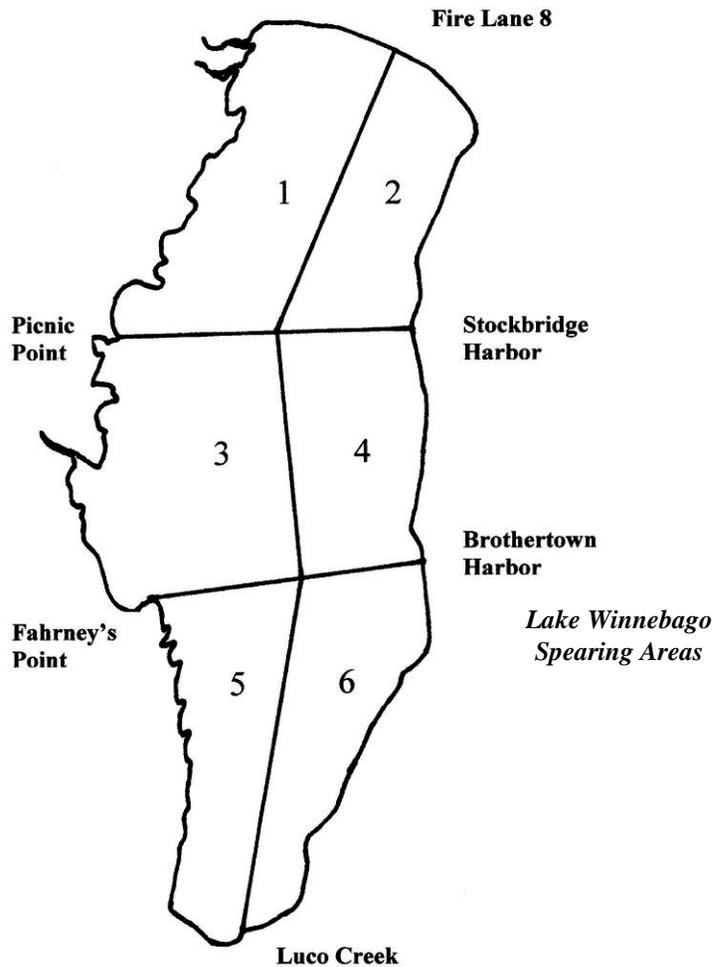
Station No. Station Location

Lake Winnebago

- 1 at Waverly Beach Resort
 Junction of U.S. Hwys 10 & 114
- 2 behind Harrison Town Hall
 Junction of U.S. Hwys 114 and State Park Rd
- 5 at Harbor Bar
 Stockbridge on the lake
- 6 at the Quinney Quencher
 Quinney on the lake
- 8 at Jim and Linda's Supper Club
 Pipe on the lake
- 10 at Wendt's Bar & Harbor
 Hwy 45, 8 mi. N of Fond du Lac
- 11 at Jerry's Tavern
 1210 Ceape St., Oshkosh
- 12 at Payne's Point Tavern,
 Cty Trk A 3 mi. S of Neenah

Note – Some station numbers are missing, (i.e.: 3 , 4, etc) due to changes in the number and location of stations over the years.





LITTER

It is illegal to place or deposit any materials (including biodegradable fish or fish parts) on the lake bed that cannot be retrieved. Any material used in a sturgeon spearing hole must be removed by the sturgeon spearer when the hole is abandoned, or if requested by a warden.

Any material that is left on or frozen in the ice or waters is the responsibility of the person who left the material (including tar paper, wood, cardboard or any other litter used adjacent to shanties).

FISHING EQUIPMENT OR GEAR

It is unlawful to possess a fishing pole, hook and line angling equipment, or other similar devices that could be used to catch fish in an ice fishing tent, shanty, or other ice fishing enclosure with ice holes larger than 12 inches in diameter or square.

ICE SHANTIES AND SHELTERS

The door of any occupied shanty/shelter shall be such that the door can be readily opened from the outside.

All shanties/shelters must have the name and residential address of the person owning or using the shanty. The name and address must be painted or permanently affixed on the outside with a minimum of 1" lettering.

All shanties/shelters must be completely removed from the ice (for all inland waters south of Hwy 64) by the first Sunday following March 1.





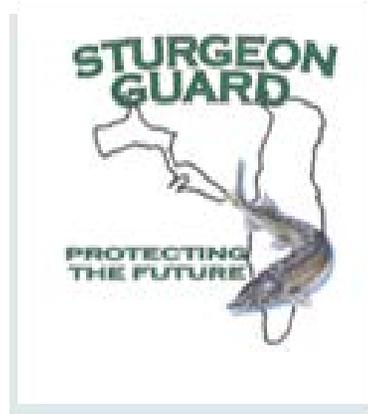
A memorable last day of the 2015 season for the Drexler family as this father (Robert) son (Derek) duo harvested two fish from the same shack. Derek speared his 70.1", 75.6 pound fish first, while Robert's 50.2", 23.9 pound fish came through just a half hour later (DNR Photo).

Lake Sturgeon Ave Length at Age – Winnebago System

Total Length (in)	Male Estimated Age (yrs)	Female Estimated Age (yrs)
36	9	9
38	10	10
40	12	12
42	14	13
44	15	15
46	17	17
48	20	19
50	22	21
52	24	23
54	27	26
56	30	29
58	33	31
60	36	34
62	40	37
64	43	41
66	47	44
68	51	48
70	55	51
72	60	55
74		60
76		64
78		69
80		73
82		78
84		83

Sturgeon Guard Volunteers Needed In Spring

Each spring hundreds of volunteers have an opportunity to guard sturgeon and protect the fish from poaching at their spawning sites on the Wolf River. Sturgeon are very susceptible to illegal harvest when they are spawning along the river's rocky shorelines. Therefore, "Sturgeon Patrol" volunteers guard the spawning fish 24 hours a day throughout the spawning season. The program is coordinated and directed by DNR Law Enforcement staff, while Sturgeon for Tomorrow and sturgeon spearing license fees fund the guard program.



Once spawning has begun, pairs of sturgeon guards are assigned to the sites for twelve hour shifts. Prior to assignment, guards check in at "Sturgeon Camp", just north of Shiocton, where they receive a good meal, a generous sack lunch, an identification hat (that they keep), and a map that directs them to their site. At the end of their shift, guards return to camp for another hearty home cooked meal before they make their way home.

Guards for 2016 will be scheduled from April 8th through May 1st. Spawning generally occurs over a 5 to 10 day period within that time frame. We do our best to get all scheduled guards out on the riverbank to see fish, although we cancel some scheduled shifts if the fish are simply not active. In those cases, we try to re-schedule guards during an active period.

Interested volunteers for the 2016 Sturgeon Guard program can find more information on the Wisconsin DNR website by searching "Sturgeon Guard". The sturgeon guard registration process is available on-line at <http://dnr.wi.gov/SGsignUp/>. Interested volunteers can also register by calling the DNR call center at 1-888-936-7463 and having DNR call center staff input information into the on-line database. You will receive an email or call to schedule a day or night in spring 2016 that is convenient for you. If possible, make it a family outing by bringing a son, daughter or your spouse. For many it has become a family tradition.

Winnebago Citizens Sturgeon Advisory Committee Members, 2016:

Mike Arrowood, WinnebagoLand Conservation Alliance.
Jeff Atkinson, Riverside Hunting and Fishing Club
Randy Bauman, Lower Cliff Fishing Club
Pat Braasch, West-Central Chapter, Sturgeon for Tomorrow
Ben Burg, Stockbridge Fishing Club
Dennis Cook, Stockbridge Fishing Club
Doug Cox, Menominee Indian Tribe of Wisconsin
Bob Doepker, Lake Park Fishing Club
Steve Doepker, Lake Park Fishing Club
Bruce Fischer, Brickyard Fishing Club
Chuck Freund, Brothertown Fishing Club
Ron Goldapske, West Shore Fishing Club
Pat Gorshals, Poygan Sportsman's Club
Dan Groeschel, Main Chapter, Sturgeon for Tomorrow
Wayne Hoelzel, Northern-Half Chapter, Sturgeon for Tomorrow
Andy Horns, Main Chapter, Sturgeon for Tomorrow
John Jenkins, Pipe Fishing Club
Al Jolin, Southwest Chapter, Sturgeon for Tomorrow
Harry Kachur, Montgomery Beach Sportsman's Club
Mike Kachur, Montgomery Beach Sportsman's Club
Dick Koerner, Twin City Rod & Gun Club, WI Conservation Congress
Darryl Lehman, Payne's Point Hook and Spear
Don Lisowe, Brothertown Fishing Club
Bill Marcks, Shadows on the Wolf
Bill McAloon, Otter St. Fishing Club
Dick Mengel, Fishermen's Road Fishing Club
Don Mielke, Lower Cliff Fishing Club
Stuart Muche, West Shore Fishing Club
Gary Olson, Berlin Conservation Club
Mike Pfankuch, WI Conservation Congress
Jim Propson, Brickyard Fishing Club
Don Reiter, Menominee Indian Tribe of Wisconsin
Dan Rudebeck, Poygan Sportman's Club
Rich Scheffler, Quinney Fishing Club
Andy Seibel, East Shore Conservation Club
Wally Seibel, Dotyville Hunting & Fishing Club
John Thull, Poygan Conservation Club
Dave Vogds, Main Chapter, Sturgeon for Tomorrow
Mike Will, Upper Lakes Chapter, Sturgeon for Tomorrow
Marvin Woelfel, Quinney Fishing Club
Matt Woods, Upper Lakes Chapter, Sturgeon for Tomorrow
Lance Ziemer, Southwest Chapter, Sturgeon for Tomorrow

The Winnebago Citizens Sturgeon Advisory Committee was formed in 1992 and since has worked closely with DNR staff to review Winnebago sturgeon harvest and population data and recommend new rules and management actions when needed.

Sturgeon for Tomorrow

In 1977 a group of sturgeon enthusiasts from the Lake Winnebago area founded Sturgeon for Tomorrow to help preserve, protect and enhance the sturgeon resource of the lake system. That group quickly grew into the largest citizen advocacy group for sturgeon in the world, currently made up of five chapters and over 3,000 members.

Through tremendous dedication and hard work Sturgeon for Tomorrow (SFT) has raised and donated to date over \$850,000 for sturgeon research and management. SFT has funded a wide variety of projects over the years including the sturgeon guard program, the Sturgeon History Project, purchase of sampling equipment, spawning and nursery site construction, sturgeon population assessments, sturgeon propagation, and the Upper Fox River sturgeon rehabilitation project. SFT also provided the support necessary to ensure the enactment of the \$1,500 fine for possession of an illegal sturgeon, and actively participates in Winnebago and statewide sturgeon management advisory committees.



If you are interested in further information about Sturgeon for Tomorrow or are interested in attending one of their five fund raising banquets held each year, please call:

Jim Patt	SFT Southwest Chapter President (Fond du Lac) Banquet January 9, 2016 in Fond du Lac	920-922-7136
Dan Groeschel	SFT Main Chapter President (East Shore) Banquet January 23, 2016 in Kiel	920-923-1077

Wayne Hoelzel	SFT Northern Half Chapter President (North Shore) Banquet February 6, 2016 in Darboy	920-725-1206
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Pat Braasch	SFT West Central Chapter (Oshkosh-West Shore) Banquet March 19, 2016 in Oshkosh	920-231-4708
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Matt Woods	SFT Upper Lakes Chapter President Banquet September 9, 2016 in Orihula	920-582-0113
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Call now to get your Sturgeon for Tomorrow banquet tickets!



Sherwood Lions Sturgeon Derby

The Sherwood Lions Club will once again be selling Sturgeon Derby tickets for the 2016 sturgeon spear fishery. Ticket proceeds benefit Sturgeon for Tomorrow and various Lion's Club Charities such as the Wisconsin Lions Camp in Rosholt. The Rosholt Lions camp is dedicated to providing a quality camping experience, free-of-charge, to eligible Wisconsin resident

residents who are blind or visually impaired, deaf or hard of hearing, and youth who have mild cognitive disabilities or diabetes.